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Washington Merry-go-round

By Jack Anderson

WASHINGTON — Two months ago, Salvatore Briguglio was gunned down, gangland-style, on the streets of Manhattan. His murder, which remains unsolved, was no ordinary mob hit. He was a key suspect in the Jimmy Hoffa case.

Ostensible, Briguglio was a business agent for Teamsters Local 560 in Union City, N.J. But his real duties apparently were more ominous; he was a reputed "button man" for the notorious "Tony Pro." The latter, known more formally as Anthony Provenzano, is the boss of Local 560 and an identified member of the Mafia.

Tony Pro is also a suspect in the Hoffa investigation. His late associate was shot, union sources believe, because he talked too much. Men like Provenzano and Briguglio infest the labor unions in America. Several locals have been taken over by mobsters, hoodlums, who have turned them into criminal power bases.

As part of our continuing reports on organized crime, we have been writing lately about labor racketeering. Our findings have been reaffirmed by Justice Department organized crime experts, who have just testified before the Senate Investigations Committee. Their message, delivered in grim language, was clear: Labor racketeering is flourishing in America.

Robert Stewart, head of the Newark, N.J., organized crime strike force, shed new light on Hoffa's disappearance. Ap-

parently, Hoffa was liquidated by the mobsters he had befriended during his rise to power in the Teamsters Union.

Not long after he vanished, reported Stewart, "the investigation focused upon suspects A and D." Our sources identified the two mysterious suspects as Provenzano and Briguglio.

Tony Pro has always lived by the gun. He seized control of Local 560 in 1961 after the violent elimination of his chief rival, Tony Castellito. Provenzano and Briguglio were charged with the murder.

According to the Senate testimony, Provenzano's 17-year reign of the union is "a classic study in labor racketeering." Here is a small part of the story, gleaned from Senate testimony, confidential Justice Department files and our own investigation:

—Ralph Picardo, a protected government witness, told investigators that he was recruited by Briguglio in the late 1960s for Tony Pro's gang. Picardo "was directed to participate in various incidents like these could discredit organized thefts, hijackings and 'bust out' operations, all of which involved organized rings of professional criminals operating in multiple states in the Northeast."

—While Tony Pro served four years in prison for attempting to extort kickbacks from a trucking company, Local 560 salted away \$223,785 for him. He began collecting the cash during his final year in the slammer. The

payments continued until he rejoined the union in 1975.

—In 1966, Briguglio and Provenzano's brother, Nunzio, were locked up for attempted extortion in another labor shakedown scheme. According to Senate testimony, "both felons returned directly from prison to the local's payroll. In 1973, Briguglio was again jailed, this time for counterfeiting. But he was hired by the union as soon as his prison term ended in 1974."

—Three years ago, Briguglio and Provenzano allegedly agreed to fence \$1 million worth of securities and bonds stolen from separate victims in New York. "The boss and underboss of a different organized crime family were directly involved in the conspiracy to fence the stolen paper," it has been sworn.

—Provenzano was convicted last March of conspiring to arrange a kickback on a loan from the New York Teamsters Conference pension fund.

Incidents like these could discredit and destroy the labor movement in the United States. In the 1950s, labor leaders headed off an attempt by the communists to infiltrate and dominate the unions. It was a bitter struggle, which the legitimate unionists won. Now it may take another battle to drive organized crime out of the labor movement.

HOOVER'S VENDETTA: Evidence has now boiled up from FBI files that the

late J. Edgar Hoover pursued his vendetta against the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., even after the civil rights leader was in his grave.

A secret internal memo, dated March 11, 1969, reveals that the FBI continued to attack the credibility of King's widow, Coretta, and his successor, Dr. Ralph Abernathy. The memo indicates that the electronic bugging of King's family and friends also continued after his death. When King was alive, Hoover and his minions wiretapped his private home for more than two years. At least 15 hidden microphones were planted in hotel and motel rooms where the black leader stayed. Phone taps were also installed at his offices in New York City and Atlanta.

The 1969 memo indicates that the FBI was still planting dirty stories against Coretta King and Ralph Abernathy, "on a strictly confidential basis," a year after King's martyrdom. The last paragraph of the memo significantly said: "We can do this without any contribution to the FBI and without anyone knowing that the information came from a wiretap."

Searches of Justice and FBI files show no sign that then-Attorney General John Mitchell granted Hoover permission to tap these phones in 1969. As for the plot to plant an unfavorable story, we have evidence that the FBI, in fact, did leak such stories against Mrs. King and Dr. Abernathy.